

The Van Saun House
Preakness, Passaic County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
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133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Van Saun House
Preakness, Passaic County, New Jersey

Owner: Mr. Aaron Laauwe

Date of Erection: 1770

Architect:

Builder: Samuel Van Saun

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction - Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - native brown stone to the eaves, partially stuccoed; gables clapboards

Interior walls - plaster good condition on first floor and poor on the second floor

Roof - present pitch
original roof - gambrel, shingles

Historical Data:

Samuel Van Saun in 1769 bought a strip of land from the Doremus family. He came to Lower Preakness to live and built a new house in 1770. The house bears a D.A.R. tablet stating that it was Lafayette's Headquarters. It is said that Lafayette occupied this house twice as a guest of Samuel Van Saun and that would correspond to the time Washington was at the Dey Mansion in 1780. This is based mainly on tradition. The only

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authority for saying that this house was the headquarters of Lafayette is that the initials "M. de L." were scratched on one of the window panes. This pane is now missing; but older residents claim that the story is true.

The house has undergone many changes since its erection in 1770. Originally, there was a low stone kitchen on the east end which was removed some years ago. A new frame kitchen was put on the west of the house. The windows with heavy sashes and small panes were replaced in 1900; blinds have also been added. It was during this renovation that the window with Lafayette's initials mentioned above seemed to disappear.

In 1875 the roof of this old house was raised and made very steep, dormer windows were added. The original roof was gambrel. The old door was of the Dutch divided type. It has been replaced by a French door. The porch is also partially new.

Bibliography:

Information from Dr. Rauchfuss

Field Book and Drawings of Survey

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Rev. Sept. 5, 1936 - T.W.

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The first member of the Ryerson family in what is now Passaic County was Joris Martinse Ryerse who joined Arent Schuyler in buying land in 1695. About 1710 he settled at Pacquanac (near Mountain View). The next of the Ryerson family was Johannes who was probably the builder of the present house about 1750. It remained in the Ryerson family from that time until recently. The date 1750, however, could apply only to the wing of the house by the road; the main house is probably post-revolutionary. The wing is of rough stone while the main house is of dressed stone.

In the fall of 1780, Lafayette had his headquarters in a tent back of the house; it was called "Light Camp". Apparently, Lafayette did not commandeer the house. In all likelihood that was because the wing was the only part in existence, and his host Johannes Ryerson had nine children some of them married so that the house was full.

Bibliography:

Bailey, Rosalie Fellows Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York New York, William Morrow and Company, 1936

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